



Examiners' Report

January 2011

GCE Government & Politics 6GP03 3C



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Introduction

This paper, the third of the new specification, was a mixture of the familiar and the new. With the exception of the second question on minority representation in Congress, all of the short answers had appeared in similar form in recent sittings, and very few candidates should have struggled to find three to answer. Somewhat in contrast, the three long answer questions were all new angles on familiar topics, and to do well, candidates were required to do some quick thinking to adapt what they knew to the question in front of them.

Predictably, the unfamiliar question on minority representation was by some way the least popular of the five short answer questions. Continuing the pattern of recent sittings, question six on affirmative action was the most popular long answer question, attracting nearly twice as many answers as the other two questions put together.

The new assessment arrangements are now well understood and nearly all candidates were aware of the synoptic requirement to consider more than one viewpoint on the issue raised (which may be ideological but more often, as in this paper's question seven for example, will not be). If anything, some candidates were over-eager to show this awareness, and their essays consisted of constant point and counterpoint, so that the structure assuming a zigzag pattern, and it was not always easy to discern the direction of the argument.

Some general points are worth making about candidates' approach. The distinguishing feature of an upper Level 2 or Level 3 short answer is the intelligent use of evidence to support the points being made. Answers in the middle of Level 2 and below tend to be generalised assertion, and this highlights again the importance of candidates following contemporary events as much as possible to find this sort of evidence. Time for short answers is tight, but it definitely adds quality to an answer if there is a short conclusion, summing up the preceding discussion. Finally, regarding introductions, these are unnecessary in short answers. In long answers they need to be two or three sentences at most, setting out the key issues and indicating the direction of the argument to follow. Some answers began with introductions which ran over a page, surveying, for example, the history of race relations since 1787, and usually offered very little to reward.

Question 1(x)

Third parties is a favourite topic of examinees and over 90% of the entry attempted this question. Most candidates were aware of what the question required of them, although some attempted to analyse the extent of the impact of third parties, rather than the factors which limit it. Given the familiarity of the topic, it is slightly surprising that the standard of answers was not higher; as indicated in the introduction, what limited many was their lack of evidence to support the points they made, or to attempt to evaluate their significance.

Indicate your first question choice on this page.
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Put a cross in the box ☒ indicating the first question you have chosen.
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Question 1 ☒ Question 2 ☒ Question 3 ☒
Question 4 ☒ Question 5 ☒

Minor parties (US Green Party) are at a disadvantage and are unable to cause an impact. Similarly, this is also true in the UK and its smaller parties. Factors that cause this limitation include, The electoral system, State Ballot Access laws, Finance and Media coverage. The electoral system promotes a two horse race, making it almost impossible for a minority party to gain an influence.

State Ballot Access Laws can cost a party anything up to \$12 million to appear on ballots state wide. Larger states such as Texas would also acquire many signatures supporting the party.

Many businesses see minor parties as wasted votes so do not provide them with financial support. Many cannot receive state benefits as they must have received at least 5% of votes in the previous election. Most of the money minor parties do have would be spent on ballot access laws.

Finally, the media does not offer coverage of the minor parties. This causes a lack of public recognition compared to the two main parties.

Overall the main factors that limit the electoral impact of minor parties are all linked. However one of the

key factors is their lack of finance because in US politics you have to 'pay to play'.

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Examiner Comments

This answer is not untypical of the standard of answers produced for this question. There are four separate points but none is developed with any conviction - the figure of '\$12 million' gives every appearance of being plucked out of thin air, for example - and the answer belongs towards the bottom of Level Two.

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Examiner Tip

Short answer introductions: this candidate gives an overview in the first paragraph of the points they are going on to make. There is a waste of time; the points cannot be rewarded twice, and in this case they are barely developed beyond the initial summary anyway.

Question 2(y)

Given that 'extent of minority representation' is part of a fairly brief specification for Racial and Ethnic Politics, this question should not have come as too much of a surprise to centres, but it was evident that few, if any, candidates were prepared for it. Those that did tackle it did so presumably out of desperation, since hardly any made much advance into Level Two. A good proportion could explain the concept of a majority-minority district but after that rewardable points dried up for almost all; among other factors, the escalating cost of Senate campaigns and the nature of state-wide electorates could have been explored. A number attempted to make something of relative incumbency rates, but in fact Senate incumbents are almost always proportionately less safe than their counterparts in the House.

Centres need to employ a little imagination when anticipating possible questions. On any given paper, there will always be some that are new, but the specification sets well marked parameters which must always be observed. It would be particularly prudent, for example, for centres to ensure that all the 'key concepts' of the specification are known and thoroughly understood by their candidates.

Indicate your second question choice on this page.
You will be asked to indicate your third question choice on page 9.

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The Representation of minorities in the political process is something which has been growing in recent years, reflected by the election of President Barack Obama who initially came from the Senate. However during his time there he was the only black Senator and after him there was only one more. This accounts for 1% of this chamber. This is a 1% compared with the 12.8% of the population who are African American. This is compared with 9% in the House of Representatives which is much closer to a representative figure. The reasons for this are not 'de jure' as in the early 20th century but 'de facto'.

Primarily the gulf in representation lies in the fact that Senate elections are held on a statewide basis compared with the congressional districts for the House of Representatives. This majority-minority district system allows for the state legislature to 'gerrymander' the congressional districts every 10 years based on the population count. They can create districts which have an African American majority usually ensuring the electoral success of African American candidates. This is not as easy to achieve in the Senate as there are no states where a single ^{ethnic} minority outweighs the white population. For this reason it is hard for the parties to secure votes for candidates who are of an ethnic background the possibility of election.

This is linked to the Primary System, which takes control from the central Party Headquarters, as a result of the supposed "smoke filled rooms" of the Party Bosses in places like Tammany Hall, New York. This means the selection of candidates is done by the electorate not the party. Unlike in the United Kingdom, the party at a national level cannot 'parachute' a minority candidate into a seat, but the local people must decide who will represent them. As ^{Tip} O'Neill said "all politics is local" and it is difficult for minorities to represent states as they are not homogeneous but usually 'multicultural' where the different racial groups do not mix in the 'melting pot' idea but more separate into distinguished groups retaining their original ethnicity. This is known as the 'salad bowl' concept which explains why minorities might not represent people on a statewide level but on a locally drawn district

They may find it easier.

To conclude the Senate's election is more biased on who will represent the entire state and this means that minority groups tend to be underrepresented due to First Past the Post. Although Congress also uses First Past the Post, it does so on a much more local level resulting in a greater equality of result. As Martin Luther King Jr said "I want to be the White Man's brother, not his brother-in-law." Minorities are better represented in a system which allows County ~~to~~ to create a synthetic 'minority-majority'.



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Examiner Comments

This answer is typical of many to this question in its limited content. The point on the second side about primaries has a promising feel but it is never really brought out.



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Examiner Tip

Question selection: before you finally commit yourself to a question, mentally run through the list of points you can relevantly make. Ideally you need at least three, and if your list stops at two - or one - have another look at the other questions.

Question 3(x)

Like question one, initiatives and propositions are a very familiar topic, which appeared on this route in its earlier guise several times before. Most candidates have been studying US politics for barely more than a term, and so it is unsurprising that at times they want to fall back on their AS knowledge; it is rarely successful though, and factors relating to UK referendums are of only limited application in a US context. This is another topic where well chosen evidence instantly lifts the quality of the answer, and references, for example, to the double negative in proposition 8 as an illustration of the disadvantages of propositions, were well rewarded. Another way of sharpening any answer which discusses advantages and disadvantages is to make it clear for whom or what an alleged (dis)advantage is supposed to operate, since often it can be both; the cost of signature gathering and campaigning, for example, can be claimed to be a disadvantage for ordinary voters, since it puts the cost of a viable campaign out of their reach, but it may well be an advantage for large corporations who can thereby exploit the initiative process to bypass elected politicians.

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Chosen Question Number:

Question 1 ☒ Question 2 ☒ Question 3 ☒
Question 4 ☒ Question 5 ☒

Initiatives / propositions are used in 24 states in America.
~~They are where the electorate~~ They are where the electorate
can add an idea to the ballot paper that has
not yet been decided or discussed by state legislature.
They are much like referendums but the electorate
initiates the ~~making~~ decision. Usually around 20% of
the electorate ^{signature} are needed to add an initiative to the
ballot paper.

~~Advantages~~ Many argue there are significant
advantages of propositions. The most important ~~being~~
it is the public who can initiate the change. This is
~~more~~ so important because ~~the~~ even if state
legislature is ignoring a subject - the electorate can force

Furthermore, ~~when~~ if a proposition is passed, it is very difficult for it to be amended in light of any difficulties or loopholes with wording - while this does mean the state governments can not change its meaning for their own benefit, it ~~does mean~~ also doesn't allow for ~~that~~ the same debating process used for normal legislation.

Also the arguments against outline key disadvantages
with the initiative system ~~and~~ ~~and~~ ~~and~~ ~~and~~ ~~and~~
but

**ResultsPlus**

Examiner Comments

This is a very characteristic mid-upper Level Two answer. There is a good range of points on both parts of the question, but a shortage of evidence to support them. If the candidate was able to find a good example of a wealthy interest group manipulating the initiative procedure, and evaluate its significance, it would almost certainly lift the answer into Level Three.

**ResultsPlus**

Examiner Tip

Evidence: a range of contemporary examples is crucial to moving your answer from Level Two to Level Three, since they provide the evidence to back your points up.

Question 4(z)

This question was a straightforward version of a popular topic and was attempted by a good proportion of candidates. Once again, the factor which limited answers to Level 2 was the lack of development; lobbying is in its nature is a covert activity, but it has nevertheless received plenty of coverage in recent years which could have been profitably used. The Abramoff scandal, the ban President Obama imposed on the employment of lobbyists (and its alleged attenuation subsequently) and the role lobbyists played in the passage of health care (see for example <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=otyULfBC6Vg&NR=1>) could all have been adduced and discussed.

Indicate your third question choice on this page.

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If you change your mind, put a line through the box ☒
and then indicate your new question with a cross ☒.

Chosen Question Number:

Question 1 ☒

Question 2 ☒

Question 3 ☒

Question 4 ☒

Question 5 ☒

The impact of lobbyist has been fairly controversial over the years.

Firstly one factor is that lobbyists such as the National Rifle Association's Chris W. Fox can become excessive. One notable occasion was Jack Abramoff who was jailed for bribery which was unethical lobbying. This can tarnish the way policies are made and make people more suspicious of the political system and ruin its integrity.

Furthermore, ~~press~~ lobbyists from pressure groups can become part of the 'power elite' and are able to influence US policies. For instance members of the 'neo-conservatives' American Enterprise Institute who were incorporated into the Bush administration and were able to heavily influence US foreign policy. This has been seen to be controversial as it undermines republican democracy and it also represents a unfair minority of society.

Additionally there is the 'revolving-door syndrome' which has brought controversy as elected officials take money to lobby government if they lose their seat in an election. This ~~has~~ ~~brought~~ ~~controversy~~ is controversial as politicians who have just been rejected by voters who no longer want these people to work ~~for~~ for them and remain then are still getting paid to influence the policy-making system.

Moreover the decisions ~~made~~ ^{influenced} by lobbyists tend to favour big businesses such as oil companies who want legislation to benefit ^{their companies} ~~them~~. This undermines representative democracy as lobbyists are not representative of society ~~and~~ as they are unelected and therefore unrepresentative. Therefore it can be said that many policies which come out of Congress are not democratic and not what the ordinary person desires. This is controversial as it creates anger amongst the public and adds corruption to the American political system which people resent.


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Examiner Comments

This answer has the merit of a clear structure and some good use of supporting detail. Some of the expression could be more precise, but overall it belongs at the top of Level Two.


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Examiner Tip

Clarity of structure: plan your answer briefly (if only in your head) before you start writing, and work out which points you are making, and in what order.

Question 5(z)

It continues to be a puzzle why questions on parties are less popular than they are, since they offer candidates unrivalled scope for drawing on their own knowledge, rather than relying on their textbooks. The stronger answers showed a really impressive grasp of both current events and recent history. It has also to be said that a good proportion of answers relied on a rather formulaic recital of the values and policies of the same three factions within the party, the Blue Dogs, the Democratic Leadership Council and the 'internet left', sometimes with little reference to their influence, which was after all the question. Press reports of the demise of the DLC in February (see for example <http://www.latimes.com/news/politics/la-pn-democratic-leadership-council-20110208,0,2842242.story>) suggest that these answers will require updating next time round.

Criteria
Presidents
Policies
Positions of Power
Outside Congress
Numbers

Indicate your third question choice on this page.
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 If you change your mind, put a line through the box ☒
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Chosen Question Number: IT IS | IT ISN'T

Question 1 ☒ Question 2 ☒ Question 3 ☒
 Question 4 ☒ Question 5 ☒

Influential
Left Wing
Progressives *DLC*

The definite left wing of the Democratic Party are the Progressive faction, as they are the most liberal faction. Fighting for health care reforms and help to the poor and ethnic minorities.

There are many factors which determine how influential they are - for example, whether they have an ally with the President, policies that they have managed to pass, positions of power and how well known they are.

For example, the President Barack Obama favours the Progressives, therefore increasing their influence as they have the same ideas about lots of policies such as the health care reform. They are the largest faction in the Democratic Party with approximately 80 in numbers. They have a large

approximately 80 in members. They have a large influence in sub-committees and ~~area~~ committees as Progressives chair a possible 10 of 20 committees. ~~Under~~ influence is conflicting with that of the right wings, casting a shadow on their attempts to influence the executive and pass policies.

**ResultsPlus**

Examiner Comments

The key word in this question is 'influential' and, although the expression could be sharper and some more evidence adduced, this answer does have the merit of keeping influence fairly tightly in focus.

**ResultsPlus**

Examiner Tip

Keep using the key word or words of the question in your answer, as it will help keep your response directly linked to the question.

Question 6

As indicated earlier, race maintained its recent position as most popular essay topic, a complete reversal from a few years ago. An important requirement of this question was to establish, at least implicitly, what the aims of affirmative action were (and are), against which its success and failure could be measured. Without this, a lot of the discussion of the attitudes of the 'extreme left' and the 'moderate right' lacked focus, and indeed read like answers to a different question. Similarly, the evidence produced of continued racial profiling, and discrepancies in mandatory minimums for 'black' and 'white' offences, was potentially relevant but was very often not made so; continued racial profiling may not be evidence of the failure of affirmative action, for example, if the elimination of racism from the police force was never part of its aims.

Many answers drew on the same narrow range of sources, with the consequence that they sounded very similar and conveyed little sense of personal engagement. The reliance on statistics of doubtful provenance, highlighted in last summer's report, continued unabated; it is worth repeating that, without attribution, statistics add very little substance to an argument. Combined with the anecdotal feel to a number of points often made - e.g. 'affirmative action makes blacks lazy' - there was a notable lack of rigour in many answers.

Put a cross in the box ☒ indicating the question you have chosen.
If you change your mind, put a line through the box ☒
and then indicate your new question with a cross ☒.

Chosen Question Number:

Question 6 ☒

Question 7 ☒

Question 8 ☒

Affirmative action was an issue of massive importance in the 1960s and 70s, and is still a hotly debated issue today. Despite its apparent success in this time period, it cannot be ~~for~~ forgotten that George Wallace, white ~~sup~~ supremacist, won over 13% of the presidential vote in many Southern states in 1968, showing the opposition ~~to~~ clearly, especially as Wallace fought as an independent.



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Examiner Comments

An introduction is important for an essay; it should clarify any key terms in the question, outline the key issues it raises, and indicate the line of argument the essay is going to follow. Although it does at least mention affirmative action, this introduction unfortunately fails to do any of these things. By focusing on opposition to affirmative action, rather than its success or failure, the candidate immediately gives the impression that they have an answer they intend to deliver, irrespective of what the question is.

Question 7

Election outcomes are usually a popular topic, but the small numbers attempting it, and the generally moderate performance of those who did, suggest this question caught candidates unawares. 'The outcome of recent elections' features unambiguously in the specification, and, as this question shows, they can be asked about in a way which allows a synoptic discussion. A number of the answers seemed to have been written with the question set in the summer on the *significance* of midterms in mind, with the consequence that they were in good part unrewardable. The question did ask about elections in the plural, and those answers that could only refer to 2010 were unable to progress beyond Level Two for AO1.

Put a cross in the box ☒ indicating the question you have chosen.
If you change your mind, put a line through the box ☒
and then indicate your new question with a cross ☒.

Chosen Question Number:

Question 6 ☒

Question 7 ☒

Question 8 ☒

Mid-term elections are the set of Congressional elections that occur half way through a Presidential term where the whole of the House of Representatives (HOR) and a third of the Senate are elected. There are a few determinants of Congressional such as these have over the last 8 years, it seems that the most prominent determinant is that of the performance of the President. The extent to which this is true can be debated.

Some political analysts ~~believe~~^{argue} that midterms show the electorate short-term retrospective voting patterns and beliefs on the President's performance. They argue that in 2006, the Democratic victory in the congressional, capturing the House, ~~and~~ was on the back of increasing anger over Bush and the Iraq war. Some analysts go further and say that the result

was a direct reaction to Bush's poor handling of the Hurricane Katrina disaster. Thus it is argued that, because voters vote short-term retrospectively, the President's performance is the main thing up for 'referendum' during the mid-term.

Furthermore, these coat-tail effect are seemingly realised by the Congressmen as well. During the 2010 mid-term, Democratic Congressmen (Blue Dog Democrats in particular) were urging Obama not to come to their state, worried that his 'failure' in the first two years would hurt the outcome of their election. Thus Congressmen also realise that mid-terms are hugely affected by a President and their performance. ~~However~~,

The 2010 mid-terms are also extremely striking. ~~Various~~ analysts argue, on just how vital a determinant Presidential performance is.

Analysts argue that, due to Obama's 'failure', the Democrats lost the 2010 elections. This they argue can be shown two-fold: Firstly, ^{the loss} his inability to satisfy and thus mobilise the left and grass-roots of the party due to his seemingly 'half-hearted' approach to radical reforms. Jim McDermott and other Progressive

~~Congressmen~~ ^{Democrats} were disappointed with his health care reform saying it hadn't gone far enough. And clearly, with the 2010 Democratic mid-term Primary turnout being extremely low (between 2 and 9%), the grass-roots of the party weren't impressed either.

Secondly, Obama's seemingly 'too liberal' legislative history caused a retreat of the

the right of voters independent back to the Republican party. Analysts argue therefore that Obama wasn't able to please the right or left of his party, causing disillusionment and defection of independent voters that voted for him in 2008. Thus Obama's performance was responsible for the Democratic loss in 2010 and thus they argue that the 2010 midterms were a 'vote' on the Obama Presidency, a repudiation and thus a 'referendum'.

However, other political commentators would suggest that this 2010 defeat wasn't a repudiation of Obama, rather that his previous victory was a repudiation of Bush. They argue that yes in 2006 and 2008 a lot of the Congressional seats were won off the back of anger at Bush however, once the Bush regime ended, these independent that usually vote ^{for} with the Republicans were always going to shift back, regardless of Obama's performance. This they argue can be seen through the rise of the Tea Party that ~~was~~ started during 2009, well before the Mid Term, suggesting that, as soon as Bush had gone, the Republicans went about finding a new way to win back their votes. Thus analysts argue that it wasn't a referendum on Obama, rather a reaffirmation of conservative independents with their old but reinvented party.

Furthermore, analysts point to incumbency as an overriding determinant of mid-term elections. In 1998, 98.3% of the House of Representatives that were ~~was~~ (HOC) that were seeking re-election won their seats. This phenomenal statistic suggests that regardless of Presidential performance, incumbency will always have the majority of the seats decided or 'safe'. This is further shown through the 2010 incumbency ratios being 87% in the HOC and 84% in the Senate. ~~As~~ some votes may have voted against the Democrats because of Obama but truth be told, the majority of seats (which is lower than usual) were safely recaptured by incumbents. These analysts argue that had the 2010 and 2006 midterms been a true referendum on Obama and Bush's performances, the swings would have been, as ~~consequently~~ higher.

In addition, analysts point out that local issues as well as national issues are ~~important~~ determinants of Congressional elections. Thus, in 2010, analysts ~~show~~ point out that a lot of Democrat losses were by Blue Dog Democrats. This suggests that a lot of the people in those states who had previously been enticed by a regime opposing Bush were dissatisfied with the state policies put in place by the

Democratic Congressmen. Thus each state decided to vote and in a Republican to regain a more Conservative political state. Furthermore, states like California, would take into account individual Congressmen and their policies on ~~any~~ 'important' issues such as immigration, but also affirmative action (repeal of it through CCRI (1996)).

What's more, overriding national issues could highly ~~take~~ ~~pro~~ influence the outcome of midterms. Analysts argue that in ~~2006~~ ²⁰⁰², the mid-term was not won because the population were supporting Bush but rather ~~that's because~~ ^{that's because} the overriding national issue of the time ~~which~~ was national security.

This issue, which took over the political scene between 2002 and 2006 (and continues being a prominent issue) has always been seen as an issue best dealt with by the Republicans. Commentators argue that the people like the 'security' Men's always prefer the Republicans and their more militaristic as a 'safer' option. Thus it is argued that the President was irrelevant but rather it was the party and their policy as a whole on National Security that ~~was~~ ^{was} ~~converging~~ ^{converging} with the 2002 mid-term & the 2004 Congressmen.

To conclude, one must not use one mid-term as the example to prove the point. It is quite

safe to conclude that 2006 was a repudiation of Bush and his regime as was 2008. However, analysts argue that Presidential Performance is not the only determinant of Mid-term elections. Incoming national and local issues, coupled with other complex voting shifts that may occur, help determine the outcome of mid-term elections. One final example would be that of Clinton. In 2002, Clinton the Democrats lost Congress but in 2004, Clinton was re-elected while the Republicans retained Congress. Analysts use this to prove that mid-term aren't merely a referendum on a President's performance. The performance of Obama could have been a big determinant of the 2010 mid-term swing of 124 House seats and 12 senate seats to the Republicans but it was not the only one. These mid-term aren't merely a referendum on the President's Performance, rather a referendum on the whole political system, taking into account what has happened in both parties, locally and nationally and the voting that has retrospectively votes may look at the President, but he is not the only thing they look at.

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Examiner Comments

This is an unusually strong answer to this question. Although the candidate focuses, not unreasonably, on 2010, there is certainly enough on previous elections to place the answer in Level Three.

Question 8

Pressure groups are traditionally the most popular topic on this route, and indeed its AS equivalent, but either the new found popularity of race, or the unfamiliar angle of this question, meant this question was only answered by a relative few. Somewhat like question six, this question required candidates to adapt familiar knowledge to an unfamiliar context and it was a task beyond the majority who tried, with the consequence that Level 3 answers were few and far between. Pressure groups have always had a role in setting the political agenda and, since it is arguable whether this has increased or declined in recent years, there was plenty of scope for synoptic debate. Centres would do well to remind candidates that *answering the question* is their first priority; many candidates reproduced their prepared answer on pressure groups' contribution to democracy with only a cursory nod in the direction of the question in front of them, and consequently could not be placed above Level 1.

Overall I believe that influence and dominance of pressure groups in US society is greatly overestimated by the media. Whilst they are able to have a significant impact by raising issues, such as through *Roe v. Wade*, these cases are rare and do reflect ~~the~~ advocacy of the current US political system which is favouring towards transparency. Pressure groups are only influential if they are 'elitist' meaning they have the funds and resources of a nationwide campaign. The growing cynicism to the methods of pressure groups has also reduced their influence in recent years.

Many suggest the Iron Triangle relationship between Congressional committees, interest groups and Government departments ~~is~~ is no longer prominent thanks to decisions ~~by those like~~ such as Obama refusing to accept lobbying money and banning his administration from receiving gifts. The Iron Triangle between Dick Cheney, Halliburton (previously CEO of the company) and the Military Service Department would be much less powerful in today's society than in 2004. Similarly the 'revolving door syndrome' of previous executive employees

going to work for lobbying firms has been reduced by Obama's ban for all current employees. ^{This prevents} ~~presenting~~ cases such as Marc Racicot, Previous Leader of RNC, going to work for American Insurance Association. To conclude pressure groups rarely define political issues but rather advocate and support preexisting concerns and offer to help ~~to~~ increase awareness. Today's US society limits the role of pressure groups in agenda building.

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Examiner Comments

Conclusions are as important as introductions. The conclusion is the opportunity to give a final restatement of the thesis which has been argued for throughout the essay. This conclusion is longer than it need be, but it is nevertheless a very effective summing up of the arguments which have been deployed.

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Examiner Tip

Conclusions; a conclusion rounds your essay off. Your conclusion shouldn't say anything new or come as a surprise, since you should be clearly signalling throughout the essay in what direction your arguments are going, but it is a final opportunity to summarise them and reinforce your central thesis.

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